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INFO RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 9597  
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ DEC 9091  
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA PRIORITY 5677  
RUEHZP/AMEMBASSY PANAMA PRIORITY 0911  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 1150  
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO PRIORITY 6367  
RUEHGL/AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL PRIORITY 4192  
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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [PTER](#) [FR](#) [CO](#)  
SUBJECT: URIBE REITERATES COMMITMENT TO OBTAIN RELEASE OF  
HOSTAGES HELD BY FARC

REF: BOGOTA 8305

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SUMMARY  
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¶1. President Uribe said the GOC remains committed to obtaining the release of hostages held by the FARC, and would work with French President Sarkozy on new ways to achieve this goal. Still, he cautioned that any release should not strengthen the FARC or encourage kidnapping. GOC Peace Commissioner Restrepo denied accusations by Senator Cordoba that the GOC had deliberately seized proof of life provided by the FARC to undermine President Chavez' and her facilitation efforts, and ruled out further involvement by either Cordoba or Chavez in the process. FARC Commander Ivan Marquez criticized Uribe for "sabotaging" Chavez' role as facilitator. End Summary.

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GOC RESPONSE  
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¶2. In a December 1 speech, President Uribe said the GOC remains committed to trying to obtain the release of the hostages held by the FARC, but cautioned that any steps taken should not strengthen the terrorist group or encourage future kidnappings. He said he had spoken earlier that day with French President Sarkozy, and the two had agreed to explore new ways to achieve the hostages' freedom. Uribe stressed that while the FARC had produced proof of life for some hostages, it continues to hold over 750 Colombians that it had kidnapped over the last few years.

¶3. On December 2, GOC Peace Commissioner Luis Carlos Restrepo denied accusations by Senator Piedad Cordoba that the GOC had intercepted the proof of life which it had made public on November 30 prior to the November 20 visit of Venezuelan President Chavez and Cordoba to Paris. Restrepo reiterated that the GOC had seized the proof of life on November 29 in Bogota and had made the materials public almost immediately. He said Chavez' and Cordoba's facilitation effort had produced no results, and reviewed numerous errors committed by the two. Restrepo said the GOC no longer considers Chavez and Cordoba as an option to facilitate an accord and stressed that the GOC would work closely with the French. He warned that the FARC's intransigence--especially its insistence on a demilitarized zone in which to hold talks--would make it hard

for any facilitator to produce results.

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CORDOBA AND FAMILIES VISIT CHAVEZ  
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¶4. Senator Cordoba and twelve members of the families of the hostages traveled to Caracas to meet with President Hugo Chavez on December 1 to thank him for obtaining the proof of life from the FARC. Family members voiced frustration with the GOC for releasing the proof of life to the media before members of the families were able to view them. Yolanda Pulecio, mother of Ingrid Betancourt, sharply criticized the GOC for making available to the media Ingrid's letter to her. Cordoba repeated her claims that the GOC had deliberately obstructed her efforts to advance a humanitarian accord, and urged President Uribe to give her and Chavez until December 31 to obtain the release of some hostages. (Note: Uribe initially set a December 31 deadline for the Chavez-Cordoba initiative to show results before ending their involvement on November 21.) After meeting with Cordoba and Betancourt's family members on December 3, Chavez said he would be willing to continue working to promote a humanitarian exchange.

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FARC SPEAKS OUT  
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¶5. FARC Commander Ivan Marquez said in an article posted on the FARC's website on November 30 that the proof of life seized by the GOC on November 29 was intended for President Chavez. He had promised Chavez that the FARC would deliver such evidence during their November 8 meeting at Miraflores palace in Caracas. Marquez claimed the GOC seizure

undermined the efforts of Chavez and Cordoba over the last three months, and said "there will never be a humanitarian exchange as long as Uribe continues to act like this." He criticized Uribe's insistence on maintaining his non-negotiable points, especially the refusal to allow released FARC members to return to the group's ranks, and called him a "saboteur." Marquez said Sarkozy could play a role similar to that of Chavez in facilitating a humanitarian process, but questioned whether he would be willing to do so.

Nichols